



NEWS AND INFORMATION

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State Arts Action Network Marks First Anniversary with First Election of Council Members

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts, the leading arts advocacy organization in America, today announced the results of the first-ever election of officers and new members to the State Arts Action Network (SAAN). Judith Kaufman Weiner and Gretchen Johnston, both serving SAAN members, have been elected to serve one-year terms as SAAN Council Chair and Vice Chair respectively, while four new members were elected to the Council.

The election, which took place in June at *Leading the Charge*, Americans for the Arts' national convention, comes at the time SAAN is celebrating its one-year anniversary. The organization was formed in 2004 when two independent arts advocacy organizations (the State Arts Advocacy League of America and the National Community Arts Network) merged into Americans for the Arts. SAAN's major project this year is to identify grant funding to help state arts advocacy and arts service groups provide administrative support to arts and cultural organizations that are struggling financially. SAAN consists of 37 organizations in 34 states.

Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO for Americans for the Arts, stated, "we are delighted to mark the milestone of SAAN's first anniversary with the election of four outstanding community arts advocates and the elevation of two of our most devoted council members to leadership positions. SAAN is a great example of collective action, which is the most effective way to positively impact and advance the cause of arts advocacy. America's communities are the clear winners of this election."

Judith Kaufman Weiner, elected to the Chair, is the executive director of the Alliance of New York State Arts Organizations. Under her stewardship, the alliance dramatically increased capacity to deliver technical assistance, professional development, and advocacy services to arts organizations throughout New York. Ms. Weiner received a B.S. from New York University.

Gretchen Johnston, elected as SAAN Council Vice Chair, is the executive director of the Washington State Arts Alliance, the statewide membership organization dedicated to arts advocacy. Ms. Johnson has a B.A. in theater from Eastern Washington University. She has worked in both the visual and performing arts as an individual artist, a teacher, a gallery owner, and an administrator.

Newly Elected SAAN Council Members:

Sally Gaskill is a 25-year veteran of community arts development, with successive leadership positions in both public and private arts agencies. Since 2000, she has led the Bloomington Area Arts Council as its executive director. Ms. Gaskill earned an M.A. in arts management from American University and a B.A. in history from Colorado College.

Dan Hunter is the executive director of the Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, a statewide advocacy and education group. An award-winning playwright, songwriter, and humorist, Mr. Hunter has 17 years' experience in politics and arts advocacy, serving as director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and running a successful advertising and political consultancy firm in Des Moines, IA. Mr. Hunter earned his B.A. from Hampshire College and his M.A. from Boston University.

Lisle Soukup is the executive director of Arizona Citizens for the Arts (formerly Arizonans for Cultural Development), as well as the new 501(c)(4) Arizona Action for the Arts. She holds a degree in creative writing and Spanish from Beloit College in Beloit, WI.

Tom Turk is the executive director of Tennesseans for the Arts, a position he assumed after 10 years as the executive director of the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission. Mr. Turk has worked with over a dozen state arts agencies and state or national arts service organizations as a consultant and workshop speaker on arts advocacy and organization development.

The State Arts Action Network is working to strengthen and build arts advocacy and service infrastructure in the United States at the national, state, and local levels. It is focused on helping to shape public policy, initiate effective advocacy campaigns, set research agendas, provide meaningful professional development, and provide peer-to-peer networking opportunities to emerging arts organizations.

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. *Americans for the Arts* is dedicated to representing and serving local

communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

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